

Waste audit activity



Background information

A waste audit is an activity designed to enable you to find out what types and volumes of waste you produce at school. It is a tool to determine the type of composting (and recycling) systems that are most suitable for your school and it is a valuable learning experience for students. It usually involves measuring and weighing a day's worth of rubbish from your school.

Involve students in as many parts of the audit as you can. Students can identify a suitable audit day, the equipment needed, and the record sheet categories and box labels. They can also carry out the audit, record, graph, analyse, and discuss the results. Finally, they can communicate the outcomes of the audit to the school and choose the appropriate waste reduction actions.

Specific learning opportunities can also be developed around:

- » **Waste data collection** – locating and mapping where rubbish bins are in the school, when bins are emptied, who empties the bins, and where the rubbish goes after it is collected.
- » **Waste sorting** – identifying different types of rubbish, what the rubbish is made of, what it breaks down into and whether it should go to landfill or be recycled/composted.
- » **Waste minimisation** – identifying which rubbish types are most common and what (if any) new recycling and composting systems your school needs to divert rubbish from landfill.



Activity instructions and equipment needed

Step-by-step instructions on how to carry out a waste audit for your school can be found on the national 'Measuring Change' website at www.measuringchange.org.nz/resources/zero-waste. If your school already has a composting system, you can also undertake an audit to find out how much organic waste your school is currently reducing. The website also provides downloadable PDF data collection sheets for a school walk through, investigating the costs of school waste, waste audit recording sheets and teacher support activities.



The 'Measuring Change' website offers a facility for schools to enter their completed waste audit results online and to receive a report summarising their school data. This report shows the amount of waste each person at your school sends to landfill and the amount of waste per person that is recycled and composted. As your school submits more data, the progress your school is making towards reducing waste can be tracked over time. Comparisons between your school and other schools in the region and across New Zealand can also be made.

Note: The Measuring Change waste audit has no provision for measuring garden waste. You may need to collect garden waste separately if you want to include this, as it is not a regular daily waste. Get the caretaker to assist you in storing and weighing grass clippings and tree prunings from school gardens. You will need this information in order to assess which composting system is the most appropriate for your school.

Starting your new system:

Once your school has undertaken a waste audit, brainstorm solutions and use the *Create your own Eden Composting At School Guide* to decide on what system best suits your school. This guide can be downloaded from www.createyourowneden.org.nz

Key questions:

- » Is the amount of rubbish produced in one day more than you expected?
- » Where did the items in each box come from?
- » Where will the items in each box end up?
- » Which box of rubbish has the largest weight/volume? Which has the smallest?
- » Why do you think there are different types and amounts of rubbish?
- » What surprised you?
- » How much do we generate in one week, in one term, and in one school year?
- » If we are already recycling, are these systems working? Are people using them properly?
- » How much of the school rubbish could be diverted from going to the landfill?
- » How can you show the whole school these results?
- » How can you reduce all this rubbish?
- » What else could you do with these types of rubbish?

Further teaching resources and learning activities relating to composting systems can be found at www.createyourowneden.org.nz

